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Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 TOKYO 18060

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, JA, US
SUBJECT: FURTHER LOWER HOUSE ELECTION THOUGHTS

REFS: (A) TOKYO 17935 (B) TOKYO 18007

SUMMARY. CONCLUSION THAT ELECTORATE OPTED FOR FRESHER SMALL PARTIES OF CENTER IN PREFERENCE TO CONSERVATIVE AND RADICAL LEFT IS WIDELY ACCEPTED AND LIKELY TO INCLUENCE PARTY BEHAVIOR IN COMING MONTHS. RESULTS, HOWEVER, ARE SKEWED BY PECULIARITIES OF JAPANESE MULTI-SEAT ELECTION SYSTEM AND OVERWEIGHTING OF RURAL VOTE TO DISADVANTAGE OF LEFT. CONSERVATIVE REVERSES, COMBINED WITH CONTINUING IMAGE PROGLEMS AND UNCERTAIN PROSPECTS IN NEXT YEAR'S UPPER HOUSE ELECTION, CONTRIBUTE TO NOTION THAT JAPAN IS ABOUT TO ENTER NEW "COALITION AGE". AWARE OF LDP DILEMMA AND HEARTENED BY OWN SUCCESS, NEW LIBERAL CLUB, DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISTS AND CLEAN GOVERNMENT PARTY ARE LIKELY TO DEMAND A GOOD PRICE FOR COOPERATION AND AVOID SUGGESTING THEIR SUPPORT CAN BE TAKEN FOR GRANTED. END SUMMARY.

1. OUR PRELIMINARY INTERPRETATION OF ELECTION RESULTS AS
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MOVE AWAY FROM EXTREMES OF POLITICAL SPECTRUM TO SUPPORT

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OF SMALLER MIDDLE-ROAD PARTIES HAS RECEIVED INCREASINGLY WIDE ACCEPTANCE. IN VIEW OF MANY OBSERVERS, JAPAN IS NOW AT THRESHOLD OF NEW "AGE OF COALITION."

2. FOLLOWING ARE AMONG ISSUES COMMENTATORS HAVE SEIZED UPON AS MOST SIGNIFICANT IN INCLUENCING OUTCOME:

--LOCKHEED. IN SAME WAY THAT "WATERGATE" CAME TO REPRESENT MUCH MORE THAN SINGLE INCIDENT, "LOCKHEED" HAS COME TO SYMBOLIZE NOT PAYOFF SCANDAL ITSELF, WHICH WAS PROBABLY RELATIVELY MINOR ISSUE, SO MUCH AS OLD-FASHIONED POLITICS, CORRUPTION AS A TOO-OFTEN ACCEPTED MODUS OPERANDI, AND CONSERVATIVE PARTY ELDERS DISREGARD OF MEDIA AND BY EXTENSION, POPULAR OPINION. VOTERS APPARENTLY WISHED TO TEACH LDP A LESSON.

--LEADERSHIP STRUGGLE. ONGOING STRUGGLE BETWEEN PRO- AND ANTI-MIKI FORCES CONTRIBUTED TO POPULAR IMPRESSION OF LDP BOSSES FIDDLING WHILE NATION CONFRONTED WITH VARIETY OF SERIOUS ISSUES. VIEWED BY MANY AS INEFFECTIVE LEADER, EVEN MIKI DID NOT ESCAPE CRITICISM. THIS ALSO CONTRIBUTED TO THE "TEACH LDP A LESSON" SYNDROME.

--ECONOMIC ISSUES. SEVERAL COMMENTATORS MENTION ANGER OF ELECTORATE AT LDP'S FAILURE TO ADDRESS SERIOUSLY PROBLEMS OF INFLATION, UNEMPLOYMENT, POLLUTION, AND IN TRADITIONAL RURAL STRONGHOLDS, CROP LOSSES AND FISHERIES ISSUES. AT SAME TIME, HOWEVER, UNHAPPY STATE OF ECONOMY GENERALLY IS SEEN BY SOME TO HAVE LED VOTERS TO REJECT RADICAL (SOCIALIST AND COMMUNIST) ALTERNATIVES. THESE FACTORS TAKEN TOGETHER LED INCREASINGLY LARGE UNCOMMITTED PORTION OF ELECTORATE TO SEEK NEW, NON-IDEOLOGICAL ALTERNATIVES. IT TURNED PARTICULARLY, BUT NOT EXCLUSIVELY, IN URBAN AND SUBURBAN AREAS TO "CENTRIST" NLC, DSP AND CGP (KOMEITO). DEEPER ANALYSIS OF ELECTION STATISTICS INDICATES THIS INTERPRETATION MAY BE AN OVER-SIMPLICICATION, BUT IT APPEARS GENERALLY VALID AND, MORE IMPORTANT, IS LIKELY TO REMAIN PERCEIVED REALITY FOR MOST JAPANESE.

3. SEATS AND POPULAR VOTE. JAPAN'S MULTIPLE CONSTITUENCY SYSTEM, AS IS CUSTOMARY, PRODUCED DISCREPANCIES BETWEEN CONFIDENTIAL

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POPULAR VOTE AND SEAT DISTRIBUTION, FURTHER ACCENTUATED BY RELATIVE OVERREPRESENTATION OF RURAL DISTRICTS. LDP, IN LOSING ROUGHLY 5 PERCENT OF POPULAR VOTE, LOST NEARLY 7 PERCENT (22) OF ITS 1972 SEATS. PERHAPS MOST DRAMATIC ILLUSTRATION OF QUIRKS IN SYSTEM, HOWEVER, IS SEEN IN CGP AND JCP SEAT RESULTS. BOTH PARTIES ATTRACTED 10-11 PERCENT EACH OF POPULAR VOTE, BUT CGP NEARLY DOUBLED ITS SEATS (FROM 30 TO 55), WHILE JCP SEATS WERE REDUCED TO ABOUT

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ONE-THIRD OF ITS PREVIOUS HOLDINGS (FROM 39 TO 17).
FINALLY, DSP, WITH APPROXIMATELY SAME (Y PLUS PERCENT) VOTE AS IN
1972, INCREASED ITS SEATS BY OVER 50 PERCENT (FROM 19 TO 29).
(HAD SEATS BEEN DIVIDED STRICTLY ACCORDING TO PERCENTAGE
OF POPULAR VOTE, RESULTS WOULD HAVE BEEN: LDP 214, JSP
106, CGP 56, JCP 53, DSP 32, NLC 21, INDEPENDENTS 29.
SIMILAR DISTRIBUTION IN 1972 WOULD HAVE PRODUCED LDP 230
JSP 108, CGP 42, JCP 52, DSP 34, NLC 0, INDEPENDENTS 25.)

4. SEAT DISTRIBUTION. IT IS OFTEN ASSERTED THAT, ALTHOUGH
NAMES HAVE CHANGED, PERCENTAGE OF CONSERVATIVE SEATS
HAS NOT DECLINED. IF ONE TAKES PORTION OF
SEATS LDP WON IN 1972 (55.3 PERCENT) AND PROJECTS IT TO
EXPANDED LOWER HOUSE, RESULT IS 283 SEATS -- EXACTLY
NUMBER WON BY LDP, CONSERVATIVE INDEPENDENTS AND NLC
IN 1976. IF, HOWEVER, ONE TAKES INTO ACCOUNT SEATS OF
CONSERVATIVE INDEPENDENTS IN 1972, COMBINED "CONSERVATIVE"
SEATS SHOULD HAVE TOTALED 297. THUS IT CANNOT BE
DENIED THAT "CONSERVATIVES" AS A WHOLE HAVE SUFFERED A
SETBACK.

5. ROLE OF NLC. WHILE THERE IS LITTLE TO DISTINGUISH NLC
IDEOLOGY FROM LDP AT THIS STAGE, IT'S COOPERATION WITH
LDP CANNOT BE TAKEN FOR GRANTED. NLC CANDIDATES WERE
SUPPORTED ACROSS BOARD WITH UNANTICIPATED ENTHUSIASM--
THREE OF FIVE TOP RUNNERS IN NATION WERE FROM NLC, AND
OF PARTY'S SEVENTEEN SUCCESSFUL CANDIDATES, FOURTEEN
FINISHED FIRST AND REMAINING THREE SECOND IN THEIR
RESPECTIVE DISTRICTS. PARTY WAS PERCEIVED AS CONSERVATIVE
ALTERNATIVE AND IT IS TO BE ANTICIPATED THAT RESULTS WILL
REINFORCE DETERMINATION OF KONO GROUP TO CONTINUE TO
PROJECT SUCH AN IMAGE. IF PARTY WERE SIMPLY TO JOIN LDP
OR EVEN CONCLUDE POLICY AGREEMENT, VOTERS MIGHT JUSTI-
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FIABLY FEEL BETRAYED. RECOGNIZING THIS, NLC HAS
ANNOUNCED IT WILL SUPPORT ITS LEADER, KONO, AS PRIME
MINISTERIAL CANDIDATE AT DIET OPENING AND WILL CONCLUDE
NO POLICY AGREEMENT WITH LDP. MOREOVER, KONO GROUP
LEFT LDP OSTENSIBLY OVER MATTERS OF CORRUPTION, AUTOCRATIC
RULE BY LDP ELDERS, AND TO SOME EXTENT, POLICY PRIORITIES
(PRINCIPALLY DOEMSTIC). IN SHORT, WE EXPECT NLC TO FEEL
COMPELLED TO SET ITS OWN COURSE.

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6. OUR PRELIMINARY DISTRICT-BY-DISTRICT TECHNICAL ANALYSIS SHEDS ADDITIONAL LIGHT ON WHY AND HOW SEATS SHIFTED AMONG PARTIES. ELEVEN SEATS WERE LOST BY LDP, BUT ONLY TWO BY JSP, AND NONE BY OTHER PARTIES THROUGH RUNNING TOO MANY CANDIDATES IN SAME DISTRICT OR MISMANAGING DIVISION OF VOTE AMONG PARTY'S CANDIDATES. JAPAN'S MULTIPLE-SEAT SYSTEM ALSO PRODUCES SO-CALLED "RUNNER-UP" PHENOMENON WHEREBY DIFFERENCES IN POPULAR VOTE BETWEEN LAST MAN ELECTED AND RUNNER-UP OFTEN SKEWS SEAT TOTALS UNPREDICTABLY. IN THIS ELECTION, FOR EXAMPLE, 18 LDP, 11 JSP, 9 JCP AND 2 DSP RUNNERS-UP WERE WITHIN 5,000 VOTES OF SUCCESS -- SOME IN DISTRICTS WITH SEVERAL HUNDRED THOUSAND VOTERS. CLEARLY SLIGHT SHIFT IN POPULAR VOTES IN THESE DISTRICTS WOULD HAVE MADE WINNERS OF LOSERS AND VICE VERSA. WHILE IT IS DIFFICULT TO SORT OUT COMPLEX OF SHIFTS IN VOTING PATTERNS, SUCH SURVEYS AS HAVE BEEN MADE INDICATE NO CANDIDATE "STEALS" ALL OF HIS VOTES FROM ONE SOURCE, AND THERE IS SUBSTANTIAL FLOATING VOTE. ANALYSIS ALSO SUGGESTS THAT LDP LOST 10 SEATS TO INDEPENDENTS, 5-7 TO NLC, 6-7 TO JSP, AND 4-5 TO DSP. JCP APPEARED TO HAVE LOST 14-15 SEATS TO
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CGP, WHILE JSP LOST 4-5 TO DSP.

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7. OBSERVERS ARE MAKING MUCH OF ELECTORATE'S REJECTION
OF SENIORITY AND EXPERIENCE IN FAVOR OF YOUTH AND NEW
DEPARTURES. AVERAGE AGE OF INCOMING DIET MEMBERS IS
54.9 YEARS (DOWN FROM 55.5 IN 1972), AND NUMBER OF
REPRESENTATIVES IN NEW LOWER HOUSE AGE 60 OR OVER DROPPED
FROM 187 TO 165 DESPITE ADDITION OF 20 NEW SEATS.
ONLY 69 PERCENT OF INCUMBENTS WERE RETURNED, DOWN FROM 73.3 PERCENT
AVERAGE RETURN OF INCUMBENTS 1958 THROUGH 1972. NUMBER
OF NEW DIET MEMBERS UP FROM 19 PERCENT IN 1972 TO 24 PERCENT. ONLY
SIX WOMEN WERE ELECTED (SEVEN IN 1972), LOWEST
NUMBER SINCE 1946, WHEN WOEMN FIRST BECAME ELIGIBLE TO RUN.
PREFERENCE FOR FRESH FACES ALSO EVIDENT IN DEFEAT OF
PROMINENT ELDERLY POLITICIANS ACROSS BOARD,
ELECTION OF NLC CANDIDATES ASSOCIATED WITH YOUTH, AND
HIGHLY PUBLICIZED ENTRY OF HEIRS OF FAMOUS POLITICIANS
INCLUDING SONS OF FORMER PRIME MINISTERS HATOYAMA AND
IKEDA. IN ADDITION TO JSP FACTIONAL LEADERS EDA,
KATSUMATA AND SASAKI, WHOSE DEFEAT NOTED REF A, LEADERS
INCLUDED THREE CABINET MEMBERS: AGMIN OISHI, SCI/TECH DIRGEN
MAEDA, AND LAND AGENCY DIRGEN AMANO.

8. POPULAR VOTE. DESPITE DRAMATIC SHIFTS IN SEATS,
POPULAR VOTE SHIFTED WITHIN PLUS OR MINUS 7 PERCENT RANGE. ONLY
PARTY TO GAIN VOTES WAS CGP (UP 2.5 PERCENT). ALL OTHERS
LOST VOTES: LDP (5.1 PERCENT),()' 0 (1.2 PERCENT), DSP (0.7 PERCENT)
,
AND JCPS(0.0 ##

##
DENTS ACCOUNTED FOR 5.7 PERCENT, UP 0.7 PERCENT.)

9. LDP'S GREATEST POPULAR VOTES LOSSES CAME IN RURAL
AREAS (DOWN 8 PERCENT), WHERE NLC WINS WERE GREATEST (7 PERCENT).
JSP LOSSES CAME ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY IN URBAN AREAS
(DOWN 2 PERCENT), WHILE DSP LOST APPROXIMATELY 2 PERCENT IN BOTH URBA
N
AND RURAL AREAS. CGP GAINS OVER ALL RANGED BETWEEN 2-3 PERCENT,
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BUT WERE LEAST IN LARGE CITIES (UP 1 PERCENT). JCP LOSSES CAME
ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY IN LARGE CITIES (DOWN 5 PERCENT); IT
ACTUALLY GAINED 1 PERCENT IN COUNTRYSIDE. AS FOR SEATS, LDP
LOSSES WERE GREATEST IN SEMI-URBAN AND RURAL AREAS,
SUGGESTING OPPOSITION PARTIES MAY MAKE FURTHER GAINS
THERE AT LDP EXPENSE, AS OCCURRED IN CITIES IN 1960S.

10. DESPITE IMMINENT CHANGE OF PARTY LEADERSHIP AND

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CABINET, CURRENT SIGNS POINT TO REASSERTION OF
"TRADITIONAL" LDP LEADERSHIP AND WAYS IN FORM OF
CONSERVATIVE "MAINSTREAM." SHORT-TERM IMPROVEMENT
IN LDP IMAGE ACCORDINGLY APPEARS DOUBTFUL. IT IS
THIS PROSPECT, IN WAKE OF RECENT ELECTION SETBACK,
TOGETHER WITH PESSIMISTIC
FORECASTS ABOUT LDP CHANCES IN NEXT SUMMER'S UPPER HOUSE
ELECTION, THAT HAS OCCASIONED TALK OF JAPAN'S ENTER-
ING "AGE OF COALITION."

11. ALTHOUGH MEDIA CONTINUED TO GIVE PROMINENT PLAY TO
VARIOUS SCHEMES FOR OPPOSITION PARTY COALITION TO
SUPPLANT CONSERVATIVES, OUT OWN VIEW IS THAT CONSERVATIVES,
IF COALITION REQUIRED, WILL TURN TO NLC, DSP AND/OR CGP.
DSP AND CGP, EITHER SINGLY OR TOGETHER, MAY PROVE TO
BE MORE AMENABLE COALITION PARTNERS THAN NLC. CONSERVATIVES
ALREADY HAVE OUT FEELERS TO ALL THREE PARTIES, AND IF
RECENT STATEMENTS OF JAPANESE BUSINESS LEADERS ARE TO BE
BELIEVED, THEY TOO ARE BEGINNING TO THINK SERIOUSLY
OF HEDGING THEIR BETS. THESE THREE PARTIES SEEM LIKELY
TO HAVE AN INFLUENCE WELL BEYOND THEIR NUMBERS IN DIET,
AFFECTING ISSUES LONG AN LDP PRESERVE SUCH AS DIET
MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET PRIORITIES. EVEN LDP AND CABINET
LEADERSHIP POSITIONS MAY INCREASINGLY BE MADE WITH
RELATIONS WITH CENTRIST PARTIES IN MIND.
HODGSON

NOTE BY OCT: ## OMISSIONS; CORRECTION TO FOLLOW.

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